DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 772 SP 039 228

AUTHOR Hines, S. Maxwell; Murphy, Maureen; Singer, Alan; Stacki, Sandra

TITLE New Teachers' Network: A University-Based Support System for Educators in Urban and Suburban Ethnic Minority School Districts.

PUB DATE 2000-04-00

NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; *College School Cooperation; Conferences; *Cultural Awareness; Diversity (Student); *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Mentors; *Partnerships in Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Secondary Education; Teacher Collaboration; Teacher Improvement

IDENTIFIERS Hofstra University NY

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses reported strengths and weaknesses in models for university involvement in preservice teacher education and support for new classroom teachers, models that tend to be either institutional and continuous or independent and transitory, and examines an alternative approach that combines institutional independence with the continuing involvement of university faculty with the professional development of new teachers. The Hofstra University New Teachers Network has been in operation for 4 years. The network offers a multifaceted approach to university-based support for new teachers. It is rooted in relationships that develop during preservice teacher education programs, separate from district- and school-based teacher development programs connected to hierarchical systems of supervision and bureaucratic constraints, and maintained through interconnections between university and secondary school classrooms, peer mentoring, regular support meetings, conferences, e-mail contact, and involvement in professional activities. (Contains 47 references.) (Author/SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 772

Alan Singer

Department of Curriculum and Teaching

243 Mason Hall

113 Hofstra University

Hempstead, NY 11550

W/ 516-463-5853 FAX/ 516-463-6503 H/ 718-768-7239

in%"CATAJS@Hofstra.edu"

New Teachers' Network: A University-Based Support System for Educators in Urban and Suburban Ethnic Minority School Districts

by S. Maxwell Hines, Maureen Murphy, Alan Singer and Sandra Stacki

S. Maxwell Hines, Maureen Murphy, Alan Singer and Sandra Stacki are members of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, 113 Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY 11549. They were assisted in preparing this article by members of the Hofstra University New Teachers' Network who participated in a roundtable at the Spring 2000 meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP039228

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Singer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

New Teachers' Network: A University-Based Support System for Educators in Urban and Suburban Ethnic Minority School Districts

Abstract

This paper discusses reported strengths and weaknesses in models for University involvement in pre-service teacher education and support for new classroom teachers, models that tend to be either institutional and continuous or independent and transitory, and examines an alternative approach that combines institutional independence with the continuing involvement of university faculty with the professional development of new teachers. At the time of this writing, the Hofstra University New Teachers Network has been in operation for four years. The network offers a multifaceted approach to University-based support for new teachers; it is rooted in relationships that develop during preservice teacher education programs, separate from district and school based teacher development programs connected to hierarchical systems of supervision and bureacratic constraints, and maintained through interconnections between university and secondary school classrooms, peer mentoring, regular support meetings, conferences, e-mail contact, and involvement in professional activities.

New Teachers' Network: A University-Based Support System for Educators in Urban and Suburban Ethnic Minority School Districts

What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future (NCT&AF, September 1996), describes a situation with which most new public school teachers are all to familiar. "[N] ew teachers are typically given the most challenging teaching assignments and left to sink or swim with little or no support. They are often placed in the most disadvantaged schools and assigned the most difficult-to-teach students. . . . Alone in their classrooms, without access to colleagues for problem solving or role modeling, discouragement can easily set in (39)." In its proposals to strengthen the teaching profession, the report by the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future urges a "complete overhaul in the systems of teacher preparation (62)" and public investment in in-service mentoring and professional development programs for teachers.

Problems related to the inadequate preparation of and support for new teachers are most pressing in urban and minority schools (Haberman, 1995; Calderone and Buettner, 1999). New York City estimates that one-sixth of its new teachers leave the school system after one year and about a third leave within three years (Schwartz, 1996). The New York City Board of Education estimates that 20% of its math teachers and 30% of its science teachers do not have state certification in the subjects they are teaching (Holloway, 1999; Archibold, 1999). The shortage is exacerbated because suburban school districts offer higher salaries which lure away the best qualified teachers in these areas. According to the United Federation of Teachers, the situation will worsen as the city seeks to fill over 50,000 teaching vacancies by the year 2006 (United Federation of Teachers, 2000; Goodnough, 2000; Wyatt, 2000).

In New York State, the Department of Education and Board of Regents are pressing school districts and university-based teacher education programs to raise standards for teacher content and conceptual knowledge and pedagogical practice (Hartocollis, 1999; Macchiarola, 1999, New York State Education Department, 1998). As a result, in the future, all teachers will be required to participate in district-supported ongoing in-service development programs in order to maintain state certification. The state is also reevaluating teacher education programs to insure that they require strong academic preparation, offer diverse, supervised, field experiences and provide instruction in promoting student literacy and technological competency. The state plans to carefully monitor teacher education programs and threatens to decertify Schools of Education with large numbers of students who fail state standardized competency examinations.

During the last two decades, there have been numerous proposals made for improving the quality of teacher education programs as part of a general call for school reform advanced by politicians, business forums, school administrators and academics. In his 1998 AERA Teaching and Teacher Education Division Vice-Presidential Address, Ken Zeichner of the University of Wisconsin-Madison traced the development of teacher education research and warned that "(i)f policymakers continue to disregard both the scholarship in teacher education, and the perspectives of teacher educators in their formulation of regulations and rules affecting teacher education programs, we will all suffer in the end for their deficit, no matter how enlightened they think their vision may be" (Zeichner, 1999, 13).

Despite the quantity of research and number of proposals, Zeichner's review article alone includes over 140 citations, recommendations for improving teacher pedagogy follow two primary, overlapping, models:

- Institutional/Continuing: calls for formal institutional partnerships involving University Schools of Education, professional, civic and business associations, state education departments, and school districts, advocated by groups like the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Abdal-Haqq, 1995), the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCT&AF, September 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1999) and the Holmes Group (Holmes, 1990) couple a demand for higher standards to insure greater accountability from the teaching profession with the creation of site-based teacher development opportunities at designated professional development schools;
- Independent/Transitory: proposals for an independent University role that focuses on extending and enhancing preservice teacher preparation, including additional field work, thorough examination of theoretical approaches to pedagogy (including critical approaches), practice in action research, and discussion of teachers as social change agents and ideas for promoting diversity (Ladsen-Billings, 1999). New York State, for example, will require the equivalent of 6 semester hours in literacy training and course work in inclusion and the use of technology in all K-12 preservice teacher education programs (New York State Education Department, 1999).

Most proposals for an expanded University role in education balance the idea of partnership with expanded preservice preparation of teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCT&AF) advocates a plan to

"reinvent teacher preparation and professional development" that includes extended, graduate-level teacher-preparation programs that provide yearlong internships in professional development schools and mentoring programs for beginning teachers (NCT&AF, September 1996). Similarly, the Holmes Group promotes the creation of professional development schools that will immerse teacher education candidates in public school classrooms, provide experienced mentors for preservice and beginning teachers, and professional development opportunities for veteran teachers. The mentoring relationship is at the core of their model; helping preservice and new teachers master productive approaches to teaching and "socializing them to new professional norms" (Holmes, 1990).

Concerns have been raised about the institutional partnership approach to school reform from a number of perspectives. Ballou and Podgursky (1999), argue that these proposals transfer significant control over education from the public domain to private organizations and question whether research on the impact of teacher.

In its third report, *Tomorrow's Schools of Education* (1995), the Holmes Group acknowledges problems emanating from earlier proposals for institutional partnerships revolving around the creation of professional development schools. The report charges that "(t)he label 'PDS' has been slapped on to all kinds of schools that do not begin to approach what we had in mind at the beginning. The most dangerous result of this wave of imitation is that the copies threaten to devalue and drive-out the realcurrency. When nothing more than a school to which students are sent for their practice teaching automatically carries the designation PDS, the deepest and most radical intentions of this innovation fade away (79)."

While this report excoriates imitators, it does not question the basic premise of the Holmes partnership efforts -- that institutions and administrators rooted in a system are free to and capable of changing it. The NCT&AF not only reframes from self-reflection, but it touts the participation of institutional powerbrokers, "governors, state education departments, legislative leaders, and business and education leaders to develop strategies for improving the quality of teaching" as a measure of the groups success (Darling-Hammond, 1999b). Both organizations might do well to reexamine the work of Emile Durkheim(1897/1951), a French sociologist, who more than a century ago rejected the idea that education or other existing social institutions could be forces to transform society and resolve social ills. Durkheim concluded that education "can be reformed only if society itself is reformed." He argued that education "is only the image and reflection of society. It imitates and reproduces the latter. . . ; it does not create it."

Research on school restructuring by Paula Lipman (1998) makes a similar point, challenging important aspects of the Holmes and NCT&AF approach to school reform. Lipman examines the way that the "top-down" nature of a supposedly "bottom-up" restructuring process contributed to frustration and demoralization among the most effective teachers, the failure to change racial attitudes in a school district, and minimal educational improvement for students. Her findings raise questions about the willingness and ability of school and district administrators, who are subject to a myriad of political forces, to challenge the institutional arrangements that earned them their positions in the first place.

In addition, Feiman-Nemser, Parker and Zeichner (1993) have questioned whether the mentoring process will simply promote conventional norms and

practices. Cochran-Smith (1991) and Cohn, McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) have expressed concern that few people who are selected as mentor teachers by administrators committed to existing educational institutions and practices will provide the kind of conceptually oriented, learner-center teaching advocated by reformers.

David Labaree, a professor of education at Michigan State University has been perhaps the most consistent critic of the "rhetoric and the practical implications" emerging from the Holmes Group, especially its 1995 report on reforming Schools of Education (Labaree, 1995). Labaree argues that the report's "populist rhetoric presents an anti-intellectual vision of the education school that hopelessly undermines the credibility of the Holmes Group as a voice for educational reform (166)." He also believes that Schools of Education are being asked to provide support for public schools without providing them with necessary resources or renumerating faculty who are expected to add involvment with professional development schools to their regular work loads (193).

The ability of Schools of Education to effectively prepare preservice teachers, acting either independently or in partnerships, has been seriously questioned by a number of commentators. Gloria Ladsen-Billings in a recent issue of *Review of Research in Education* (1999) examined six independent teacher education programs considered exemplary for preparing teachers who will address the nature of race and ethnicity in United States society and are prepared to address their implications in their classrooms and schools. Despite the efforts of these programs, which she lauded, and their shared commitment to utilize and generate educational theory, their willingness to challenge social and educational privilege, and the long term political

and intellectual commitment of teacher educators in these programs to educational equity, Ladsen-Billings concluded that "such work is difficult, if not impossible" (240). She quoted Marilyn Cochran-Smith, director of teacher education at Boston College, who compared "the process of constructing knowledge about race and teaching" with building "a new boat while sitting in the old one, surrounded by rising waters" (229) -- not an especially hopeful task. Ladsen-Billings found that her own program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which focused on the community context of schools, was expensive to operate, required an intensive commitment from the university, and had difficulty holding onto its students (237-240).

Public Agenda, a public policy advocacy organization, has accused Schools of Education of existing in an ivy-towered isolation that makes them inappropriate agents for implementing educational reform (Farkas and Johnson, 1997). A 1997 survey found a sharp gulf between the ways that University-based teacher educators and parents and classroom teachers view education. The executive director of Public Agenda concluded that the study showed that education professors were "out of sync." Sandra Feldman, President of the American Federation of Teachers, supported the findings of the study and stated, "Teachers always report that their college education hasn't prepared them for the realities of the classroom" (Sengupta, 1997). In response to these statements, Labaree (1999) charges that Schools of Education, which were initially important contributors to the partnership movement, have become convenient scapegoats for the problems of education because they lack strong political constituencies.

University-based Networks that are Independent and Continuing

During the last decade, graduates of the Hofstra University secondary education program essentially offered faculty a challenge. Alumni, who had chosen to work in urban or suburban ethnic minority school districts, felt that the university's program had prepared them to become beginning teachers, encouraged them to take positions in difficult school settings where they could advocate for students, and then, once they had graduated, left them to navigate school systems and figure out how to "really" teach working on their own. They complained that in their schools they often felt isolated from and in opposition to other school personnel. In response, university faculty, their former teacher education students, and some veteran teachers related to the program, developed a third approach to University-based support for teachers, particularly teachers working in urban and suburban ethnic minority school districts. This approach is rooted in educational research and based on the network of relationships that develop between university faculty, teacher education students and school-based cooperating teachers. While it requires approval from school, district and university administrations, it is independent, intensive, continuing, and we believe, "in sync" with the needs of classroom teachers. Because the teachers who participate are seen as resources and partners rather than as employees, clients or students, it requires little administrative overhead and is replicative at a relatively lower cost than programs where support is actually part of the process of supervision.

In "Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning communities (1999)", Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle examine the importance of teacher learning and the creation of teacher knowledge. They argue that there are "radically different views of what 'knowing more' and 'teaching better' mean" and that these

differences "lead to very different ideas about how to improve teacher education and professional development (249)." Cochran-Smith and Lytle believe that a key to educational reform and improved classroom instruction is a concept they identify as "knowledge-of-practice," the kind of knowledge about teaching that practitioners generate when they "treat their own classrooms and schools as sites for intentional investigation at the same time they treat the knowledge and theory produced by others as generative material for interrogation and interpretation (250)." Cochran-Smith and Lytle are critical of initiatives in teacher education that attempt to prescribe appropriate practice, what they call "knowledge-for-practice," by evaluating teachers based on their mastery of a formal "knowledge base (260)" and in which teacher development is viewed primarily as a process of providing certified trainers who coach teachers in preferred activities (261). These initiatives are often rejected by teachers who find the mandates extraneous or even counterproductive and contrary to their own experience. However, Cochran-Smith and Lytle are also critical of teacher knowledge acquired through experience, called "knowledge-in-practice," that is not subject to rigorous examination through critical reflection and evaluation of theory and research. By itself, this type of knowledge tends to reinforce, rather than question and challenge, existing educational paradigms (262-272). Knowledge-of-practice, which they believe is most effectively generated by teachers working collectively within teacher-learning communities, is based on the idea that "practice is more than practical, that inquiry is more than an artful rendering of teachers' practical knowledge (274)" and that effective teaching requires a "transformed and expanded view of what 'practice' means (276)." The notion of learning community is essential to their approach, because communities

have the possibility of creating new cultures that can support teachers in their work and transform institutions (294-296).

Ralph Putnam and Hilda Borko (2000) also offer useful ways to think about differences between this approach to supporting teachers and both the institutional partnership and independent preparation models. Putnam and Borko advocate viewing teachers as learners rather than as workers or prospective workers and organizing teacher education experiences based on the situated and social nature of cognition -- cognition that does not end with the completion of a preservice teacher education program. They propose a menu of teacher development approaches in order to create situated learning experiences powerful enough to transform a teacher's classroom practice. These approaches include conducting teacher education classes in public schools and encouraging practicing teachers to bring their experience to teacher education classes and staff development programs, and promoting the intertwining of learning with ongoing practice under the direction of university faculty. University faculty, rather than acting as the institutional partners of school administrators committed to managing workers, would support "discourse communities for experienced teachers" that reshape the "instructional conversation" and challenge existing cultures that "do not value or support critical and reflective examination of teaching practice" (8-9).

How the New Teachers Network Works

The New Teachers Network is an approach to university support for teachers based on meeting the needs of teachers and their students, an understanding of teachers as learners who create knowledge, a desire by School of Education alumni to be culturally responsive educators (Ladson-Billings, 1994) who can make a

difference in the lives of children, and the importance of supportive communities. At this writing, the network is four years old. It has evolved to include bi-monthly meetings, semi-annual conferences, formal and informal collaborations with schools, an e-mail network, peer mentoring, mentoring of teacher education students by network participants, university faculty visits to schools, and visits by new teachers to education classes.

University faculty who participate in the network are volunteers; the new teachers are their former students and student teachers. The network allows university-based teacher educators to maintain relationships with urban and suburban ethnic minority school district classroom teachers, gives them opportunities to work with secondary school students, and provides topics for research.

1.Mentoring while learning. The New Teachers' Network provides the Hofstra University School of Education with a pool of reflective young educators who are willing to visit preservice classes on methods, curriculum and educational issues to discuss their philosophies, choices, and struggles. In addition, as soon as network members start teaching, preservice teachers are assigned to their schools as participant/observers, which makes it possible for university field supervisors to visit and provide support to them in their classrooms. Participation by network members in teacher education classes and their field placements provide an opportunity for preservice teacher education students to work in urban and suburban ethnic minority school district classrooms with people who are grappling with the social and pedagogical issues raised in teacher education classes. At the same time they provide support for beginning teachers who are able to maintain their

relationships with university faculty and have an opportunity to openly discuss the trials and tribulations of the first years of teaching.

2. Collaborative teams. Relationships between university faculty and particular schools make it possible for groups of new teachers to work at the same sites and anchor collaborative support teams. At the time of this writing, seven members of the network, including two students who were still enrolled in their masters programs, were teaching at an inner city middle school in Brooklyn, New York. The group includes one second year teacher and six beginners. According to the school's published profile, 98 percent of the children are "Black" or "Hispanic," 22 percent attend some form of special education, 14 percent have limited English proficiency, and 93 percent are eligible for free lunch (New York City Board of Education, 1997). On standardized New York State reading tests administered in May, 1997, only 30 percent of the sixth graders achieved passing scores, and the eighth graders scored significantly below city and state averages. Only 56 percent of the teachers are fully licensed and permanently assigned to the building. The new teachers report that their relationship to each other and to University faculty, who meet with them on site and at the University and visit and co-teach their classes with them, has sustained them in a situation that has produced high staff turnover at the school.

According to D.K., one of the first year teachers,

> "Teaching with the other graduates of the Hofstra program at a middle school in East New York, Brooklyn has been an intense experience. The problems that inner city schools face are as dire as advertised. There is an astounding rate of teacher turnover in this school which means that positions are being filled by inexperienced

and often uncertified teachers. The more experienced teachers are overwhelmed. Neglect by supervisors, benevolent or otherwise, is the rule. 'Sink or Swim' becomes the only option.

The need for support and advice must be filled in one way or another, if first-year teachers are to "Swim" rather than "Sink". This is where the cadre of enthusiastic and hard-working teachers from the New Teachers Network comes in.

There is an indescribable comfort that I feel when discussing educational issues with members of our group. There is the assumption of certain opinions, values, goals, and commitments that makes this possible. I know when I ask for classroom management advice, or another way to present material, or some sort of spark that I can use to open a lesson and engage my students, my friends are struggling alongside me. This helps me combat the negativism and exhaustion that can so quickly and firmly entrench teachers. We all believe that our students can learn. That's the key starting point."

Five new teachers from the network were together in a suburban high school where approximately thirty-five percent of the students are members of racial and ethnic minority groups (New York State Education Department, 2000). Significantly, four of the five teachers were hired after student teaching in predominately minority schools where they worked with cooperating teachers who were part of the New Teachers Network. The fifth new teacher student taught in this school. According to one member of the group, "working with the other network members here helped me feel like I was part of something, not just another strange face all on

my own. It means there are people I can eat with and talk to and who understand what I am trying to do in my classroom."

3. School Partnerships. Partnerships with schools that support the New Teacher Network are both formal and informal. The Hofstra University School of Education has a formal relationship with a Queens, New York high school that was reorganized because of poor academic performance and concerns about student safety. Two members of the faculty serve on the school's advisory board. According to the school's published profile,the student population is 95% Black and Hispanic. Attrition is a major problem. In 1998, there were 381 freshman, 369 sophmores, 299 juniors, but only 132 seniors, as a result of the transfer of students to other schools and a high hold-over rate. (New York City Board of Education, 1999).

The key to the relationship is a long standing collaboration between one of the university faculty members and the school's theme coordinator, who taught together in New York City schools for ten years. In addition, one of the founding members of the network and an active mentor teacher works at the school. During the four year period of this study, dozens of participant/observers visited the school and eleven student teachers chose to work there. Of the eleven, eight became teachers in urban or suburban ethnic minority schools while the other three are continuing their education.

The New Teachers Network has an informal partnership with a suburban middle school with a student population that is 93% Black and Hispanic that was organized by one of the program's alumni who is currently a cooperating teacher at the school (New York State Education Department, 2000). As a result of this teacher's efforts, the relationship involves her department chair, the school principal, a senior teacher

and two former student teachers, active in the network, who teach in the school. Currently, the middle school hosts dozens of participant/observers and student teachers every semester, and in return, university faculty related to the network organize workshops for teachers and campus visits for the middle school students.

L.C., who initiated the partnership, describes how her role as a young mentor teacher and cooperating teacher impacted on her development as a teacher.

> "When I began teaching I was twenty-three years old and I started having classrooms observers almost from the beginning. After three years, I became a cooperating teacher. Even though I was still relatively new at it, I felt I was a good teacher and ready to take on the responsibility of preparing student teachers. I ended up learning a lot from the experience and I continue to learn new things every time I work with student teacher.
>
> As a beginning teacher I was under a lot of pressure to insure that my students performed well on standardized tests and I had begun to move away from aspects of lessons that I new were vital for motivating students to learn. Working with student teachers forced me to sit down and examine what I was doing as I helped them with planning and lesson preparation. If I hadn't been working with a student teacher, I don't think I would have become involved in this type of self-reflection and grown as much as a teacher myself."

A.A., who was one of L.C.'s student teachers, feels that their relationship "remains one of the greatest influences in both my life and career. Without her, I would not be teaching today. She helped me learn to deal with the stress of teaching and that I

could be a successful teacher working with minority students. Because we are both in the network now, I know I can still turn to her for support whenever I need to. This is the beauty of Lynda and the network. I don't know what I would do without them."

4. Professional Conferences. The New Teachers Network sponsors two annual professional conferences at the university organized by members where they have the opportunity to share ideas about content and pedagogy with each other and teacher education students. In the fall semester, thematic conferences have focused on social history, local history, adolescent literature, promoting literacy in the content areas, and human rights. New teachers, mentor teachers and cooperating teachers offer workshops and display exhibits of their students' work. In the spring, conferences have opened with presentations by teacher panelists on issues in their classrooms and schools followed by roundtable discussions faciliated by network members. These conferences have focused on themes like addressing race, class, gender and ethnicity in the classroom, creative maladjustment in schools (Kohl, 1994) and teacher activism. They are usually attended by between 100 and 200 participants including network members, their colleagues and student teachers.

5. E-mail Network. On Friday, February 25, 2000, four White New York City police officers charged with the wrongful death of a Black African immigrant to the city were acquitted of all charges at a widely followed trial. That evening, one of the Network's mentor teachers phoned one of the University advisors and they discussed ways that teachers could engage their students in discussion of the shooting and the verdict. They decided to speak with one of the new teachers and together they formulated a proposal that they disseminated to forty teachers on the Network's e-mail network.

Remembering Amadou Diallo

A.S., M.P. and A.T. were discussing how to talk with students, particularly African American, Caribbean and Latino/a students, but also white students, about the acquittal of four police officers in the murder of Amadou Diallo. Clearly, teachers must let students speak. But what else? What can come from the discussion that is constructive?

Should students simply vent or learn that they must be careful when approached by police officers? We decided that one way to remember Amadou Diallo and to work for change is to use his death as a symbol to help organize against injustice.

According to the New York Times, Sunday, February 27, 2000 p. 42, in an article by Dan Barry, "One Legacy of a 41-Bullet Barrage Is a Hard Look at Aggressive Tactics on the Street," 62.7% of all people stopped by the New York City Police Department's Street Crime Unit in "stop-and-frisk" operations are black and that 16 black people are stopped for every black person who is arrested.

We are suggesting that for the next three months (March, April and May), students create a log and write up descriptions of all interactions they, their family members and friends have with members of the police department -- both positive and negative. If possible, they should include in their logs the ethnicity, gender and age of both the person stopped and the police officer.

At the end of three months we can correlate our results, write a report, and send it to the New York State Attorney General's office, the Attorney General of the United States and the press.

What do you think?

By Monday night, thirteen teachers had responded to the e-mail with ideas for proceeding. One teacher submitted a lesson plan he had downloaded from the New York Times webpage. Another teacher copied, pasted and sent out news releases and editorials to use to open class discussion. Some participants simply expressed their own hopes or frustrations. The e-mail exchanges, clearly could not resolve anything, but they did give network members a sense that they were not alone as they tried to grapple with difficult issues in a difficult time.

J.B. wrote:

"I had my kids write journals today about their reaction to the verdict. My problem and/or question is: Students (African-American and White) have different views on this issue for many reasons (media twists, incorrect info from various sources, parents/relatives own interpretation). I was finding out today that many students were VERY influenced from reactions at home. I also felt some kids were sort of taking sides, based on race and not facts. Some kids did not want to discuss it at all because (and this is my own guess) they are getting opinions at home that may not be appropriate for school discussion. Whatever people say, RACE is a REAL issue for my students where the black vs. white line is VERY much there. This poses a race problem for my class. How do I deal with this?"

E.U. wrote:

"I have been crying since that verdict. Even before the trial, each time I think about aggressive white police officers in our neighborhoods, roaming around looking for trouble in any black face, I find that I have an anger at them, at their lack of knowledge of the people among whom they work,

and their uncouth behavior around us. I have experienced being stopped for no reason by a crazed looking red-faced police officer in Brooklyn, who, when he realized I was a woman, told me to drive on. When I continued on my way, I knew that that police officer was going to kick some poor black person's behind before that night was out. But who would believe me if I reported this.

You asked what students could do in a situation like Diallo's. Students should speak to their government representatives. They should meet with the police captains in their neighborhoods and make alliances with good police officers. They should be involved in asking for neighborhood policing with regular patrol officers in their neighborhoods who would know their names and the people and the feel of he community. Students should be encouraged to help the officers when they can by letting them know of people who would turn our neighborhoods into cesspools. They should also join organizations that are positive to their growth or start some. I am not minimizing the difficulties in doing any of the suggestions I have made. But it can be done. It must be done.

E.F. wrote:

"I think that the police officers and Diallo are all victims of an unjust political/economic system and the tragedy is that the current attempts to wrest justice from this horrible incident are futile because they are directed in the wrong place. Why does our society create communities where police officers patrol in fear of their lives from potentially armed, frightened citizens and the citizens fear for their lives from nervous, stressed police officers? Why do other communities in our society resemble feudal manors complete with iron gates, high walls and moats surrounding them, barring entry from "undesirables"? These are the questions

which if addressed might provide the impetus to promote a truly humanistic notion of justice and prevent the increase and continuation of further atrocities such as this one."

The e-mail dialogue continued for the next two weeks. It is important to recognize that everyone in the Network did not agree on issues and there was sharp conflict. One significance of the e-mail exchange and the New Teachers Network is that it provides a place for people who are from different racial, ethnic and social backgrounds, but who share common goals as teachers, to address their differences.

J.B. wrote:

"Let me state for the record that I am not in any way justifying the police officers in the Diallo shooting or in any recent case of wrongful shooting. But I need to vent. I am so tired of listening to the news and reading the paper and hearing the excuse of racism. Is it really that bad? Or does the media make it seem that bad, or do people like Al Sharpton make it that bad? I tend to think that the media warps our perceptions. I am tired of using race as an excuse when there is no clear answer. Yes, those police officers made mistakes. Yes, they should have been punished in some way. Yes, it is unfortunate that black men are profiled the most. But isn't that where most violent crimes occur? In Black and Hispanic communities? I have a problem with my students believing that cops and persons in authority are wrong and the bad guys. We need to improve this image. It is effecting us, as people, as teachers, and as citizens of the US. I think the Mayor of New York has done an excellent job with cleaning up the city. He is to be commended for that. Has he allowed police to become too powerful? Yes. But let's face it, has there ever been a perfect politician? Will there ever be? I doubt it."

"This issue (racism) is ripping apart communities. I see it in my own school. White parents don't want their children in the "academic" classes because the African American children are in those classes and those are the "bad" classes. We need to stop making excuses and feeling sorry for certain groups of people. Yes, we all have been abused and treated unjustly at some part in our history. Its time to stop making excuses and treat everyone equally. I don't remember people making excuses for me and my fellow classmates when I was in school. I survived. I carried all of my heavy textbooks to school, I did my homework every night, and I studied for my tests, and NO way in this world did I grow up in a "Brady Bunch" family. If we keep using racism as an excuse, we are only hindering other groups from moving forward. Can we ignore it? No, it does exist. But its becoming the excuse for everything these days. Its time to move forward. We've beat this thing to death. I'm sure I'll get some responses from this one...but you know what... I'm sure there's more than just me out there that's tired of all this."

S.C., who was an undergraduate student in social studies with J.B., wrote back:

"As history teachers can you please tell me when a police state has been successful? I am a black mother of a black boy. You do not know the fear that I have to deal with. Just because my son may be "walking while black" he is target. I not only fault the Mayor for his insensitivity, but the police department for not properly training these individuals!"

"Having a loved one who is in the NYPD has given me insight into how the New York City Police Department is divided -- even the locker rooms are segregated. Please explain to me how are they supposed to protect and serve? We are taking aout individuals who grew up outside of the city (many of our NYPD are from Long Island)

and telling them to protect areas that they are not the least bit familiar with. Not just Black, but Jewish, Spanish, Muslims and Italian areas where the culture, language, and lifestyle is very different. My friend told me that some white cops are soooooo scared that they carry two and three guns. When is this going to stop? Combating racism should not divide teachers, but unite us so we can avoid this happening in the future. I am sorry, I cannot act like nothing has happened."

"To answer J.'s question, yes, it really is that bad. When someone cannot walk down the street and not worry about being killed by the 'good guys' -- yes, it is that bad. When people believe that the end justifies the means -- yes, it is that bad. When people question the victim -- yes, it is that bad. Have you ever really feared for your life from the 'good guys'? Ask any Black man walking down the street, and he will tell you -- yes, it is that bad. It has nothing to do with socioeconomic status, it has to do with race. Please, let's not run from the truth. I am tired of race being a factor in the death of my people. I will talk about it and fight against it so my son will not be next."

6. Professional involvement. The New Teachers Network provides an opportunity for new teachers to become active in professional organizations. During the past four years, teachers and university faculty have conducted a series of research and curriculum projects that they have presented at the National Council for Social Studies and the National Council for Teachers of English and their various regional and local affiliates, and the American Educational Research Association (Murphy and Singer, 1996). Some of their work has already been published in professional journals (Pezone and Singer, 1997; Kafi and Singer, 1998; Singer, Gurton, Horowitz, Hunte, Broomfield, and Thomas, 1998).

Members are also helping to write and field test an interdisciplinary curriculum guide on the Great Irish Famine that will be part of the New York State Human Rights Curriculum. Six teachers from different schools and their classes participated in an all-day Great Irish Famine Musuem at Hofstra University where middle school and high school students presented exhibits, videotapes of performances and research reports.

7. Network meetings. Bi-monthly meetings of the New Teachers Network are informal and open. Usually between fifteen and twenty-five new teachers attend. A core group of fifteen teachers attend most of the meetings, organize agendas, follow-up on "absentees" and recruit other members. The new teachers receive no credit or stipend for participating. Neither do they pay tuition or fees (Gray, 1996; Evans, 1998). At network meetings, the university faculty ask questions and share anecdotes from their own secondary school teaching experience. Occasionally they draw connections between topics under discussion by the new teachers and issues being debated in the educational literature. The university faculty make no judgments; mostly they listen. At some meetings they hardly even speak.

While the atmosphere at New Teachers' Network meetings is supportive, discussions frequently get heated. Classroom problems are introduced, and conflicts and controversial issues are examined. Shared, sometimes traumatic, professional and personal concerns emerge during discussion, and network members need to know that they are not alone in having these experiences. The new teachers want to hear about other people's ideas, experiences, catastrophes, and successes. After long, frequently difficult weeks, the new teachers give up Saturdays to attend network meetings, so they are committed to ensuring that it is time well spent.

One network meeting was typical in a number of ways. Nineteen members of the New Teachers' Network and three university faculty members attended. Three network members were fourth year teachers who act as peer mentors for the group and sixteen were in their first or second year of teaching. Eleven taught in city schools, five in suburban minority school districts, and three in predominately white, middle class suburban communities. Among the teachers, one was African American, two were Caribbean, one was Latina, and fifteen were white from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Eleven of the teachers were women; eight were men. The university faculty members included a black male, a white female, and a white male.

A white male teacher, D.L., told an anecdote about efforts to build connections with the largely African American students in his classes. He concluded by saying that a particular incident "confirmed my faith in working with my 'dirt bags.'" S.H., a woman of Caribbean ancestory who teaches in an inner-city junior high school with an overwhelmingly African American and Latino/a student body, said that she appreciated his efforts to get close to his students, but was unhappy with the way he referred to some of them as "dirt bags". She explained, "I don't like name calling and using hurtful words. I don't let the kids use these words when they are with me. Teachers should not use language when they talk together that they wouldn't use in front of the kids or their parents."

D.L.'s statement and S.H.'s response opened up a heated discussion. G.M., a white woman who lives in the city, but teaches in a predominately ethnic minority suburban school district, added, "We all know teachers who think like this about our students." S.C., an African American woman teaching in a predominately ethnic

minority suburban high school, believed that S.H. was taking the description of the students out of context. She felt that the anecdote refuted stereotypes about inner-city African-American students and that the main point was that teachers had "to be interested in students and aware of their needs." T.N, a white woman who teaches in a city high school, said that sometimes she is concerned with her own reactions to students. "We all go into class and aren't perfect. It takes time and hard work to develop a positive classroom atmosphere. Sometimes, when I say the kids are wild, I have to catch myself and not say that they acted like animals. It is wrong to say and it is untrue." T.N. has had students challenge her and ask "Why should we trust you?" or curse at her and then add, "You ain't on Long Island anymore." She tries to remember that every day is a new day with new opportunities to reach students. She believes that the first step in reaching students is that "teachers have to want to be there." At the end, S.H., S.C., and D.L. huddled together outside the room for about fifteen minutes.

During post-meeting reflections, the university faculty were concerned that D.L. may have been treated a little too harshly. However, the following Monday, he posted a note on the New Teachers' e-mail network. "I want you to know that our meeting has caused a renewed sense of optimism. School has been very draining for me emotionally and physically. I have few allies and even fewer experienced teachers to lean on here. Life has been far from perfect. I'm looking forward to our next meeting."

Conclusions

This paper discusses reported strengths and weaknesses in models for University involvement in pre-service teacher education and support for new classroom

teachers, models that tend to be either institutional and continuous or independent and transitory, and examines an alternative approach that combines institutional independence with the continuing involvement of university faculty with the professional development of new teachers. At the time of this writing, the Hofstra University New Teachers Network has been in operation for four years. The network offers a multifaceted approach to University-based support for new teachers; it is rooted in relationships that develop during preservice teacher education programs, separate from district and school based teacher development programs connected to hierarchical systems of supervision and bureacratic constraints, and maintained through interconnections between university and secondary school classrooms, peer mentoring, regular support meetings, conferences, e-mail contact, and involvement in professional activities.

The network approach recognizes the importance of teacher learning in the creation of teacher knowledge, the situated and social nature of cognition, and the crucial role of discourse communities in the creation of learning experiences powerful enough to transform a teacher's classroom practice. Teachers participating in the New Teachers Network report that their involvement supports the ability of members working in urban and minority schools to overcome problems in troubled schools and their own inexperience and isolation to impact on the lives of young people. Involvement in the model program is voluntary, but university faculty and new teachers believe this approach can become a formal part of University support for alumni without losing effectiveness.

The importance of a program like the New Teachers Network in the life and pedagogical practice of new teachers is captured in this statement by R.G.

"I began attending New Teacher Network meetings during the 1996 - 1997 school year, which was my first year teaching. I was teaching 6th and 7th grade science in a New York City middle school even though my certification area was social studies. I am currently in my fourth year of teaching and I continue to attend Saturday morning network meetings on a regular basis. My fiancee, who is also a teacher, often wonders what happens at the meetings to keep me attending so religiously. The best way for me to answer this question is to describe how I feel when I leave a network meeting.

We all know how happy we feel on Friday afternoon when that last bell rings and it's time to go home. I'm no different. I often stay late at work, but rarely on Fridays after a long and tiring week dealing with 8th grade hormones and their endless stores of energy. I struggle to get myself out of bed on Saturday morning, but once I grab my coffee and I'm on my way my mind starts to roll. I imagine the conversations that will take place and I begin to think of questions or concerns I want to bring up. I know that whatever professional concerns are on my mind, I'll be able to talk about them there. The dynamic of the group is electric. I never feel so much like a professional as I do when I'm there. We're all there to help each other. Sometimes the topics are focused on classroom management, sometimes on how to deal with supervisors or colleagues who do not share a similar teaching philosophy and sometimes on new lesson or project ideas. No matter what, we always share our love for being with the kids. Throughout the meetings, I sit

> and write down all the new ideas I'm getting, either as suggestions from others or ideas that I thought up as a natural progression from our discussion. When I leave the meeting I am rejuvenated. I rush home and begin planning out all these new activities.
>
> The network keeps keeps the pleasure I feel when I teach, fresh, and listening to the concerns and problems of the newer teachers keeps me grounded in reality. I hear that many teachers burn out in their first five years, but I am going just as strong as I was the day I started. I'm sure it's because I have a group of people to talk to, listen to, bounce ideas off of and to give me support.

While most members of the New Teachers Network labor in anonymity, some of their exceptional achievements have been documented by the press, and illustrate the ability of one small, experimental teachers network to influence the work of teachers and the lives of secondary school students.

The "Education Life" section of *The New York Times* (1999) highlighted the work of second-year-teacher Deon Gordon Mitchell with her high school's mock trial team.

> "The practice space for the Mock Trial team of Bushwick High School in Brooklyn is a storeroom for pen-scarred desks and ruined textbooks. . . . The team itself, on paper, doesn't stand a chance in the upper-level competitions of Mock Trial, an extracurricular contest of staged courtroom drama that attracts overachievers from suburban schools and private academies -- the usual development grounds for future juris doctors. At Bushwick, a teacher correcting a team member's pronunciation was waved away with a "Keep your panties on." "Respect isn't high among these kids' values," said Mary

O'Donoghue, a prosecutor with the United States Attorney's office in Brooklyn who began coaching the team last year with Deon Gordon Mitchell, a history teacher and former Mock Trial participant. "They can be pretty mouthy, and they don't draw much of a line between street life and school life." Though it was removed from the state's list of failing schools last November, Bushwick still ranks academically among the worst high schools in the city. Nonetheless, in less than an hour on this spring day, the team will begin the quarterfinal round of the New York City championships against Abraham Lincoln High School, a school of solid reputation with a far more experienced team.

The commitment and ingenuity of fourth-year-teacher Robert Schimenz, a social studies teacher and baseball coach at a Queens, New York vocational high school was reported in an article in *The New York Times* (1999) on the impact of budget cuts on high school sports. The article described how the baseball team struggled to practice and play on a continuously flooded field.

"Hipolito Burgos, a 17-year-old senior at Queens Vocational High School, is an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, co-captain of his school's baseball team and an all-round threat as a catcher, outfielder and batter.

And he's a good man with a bilge pump, said his coach, Rob Schimenz. That's an important skill for a ballplayer at Queens Vocational. The team's home field, at a public park about two miles from the school, takes on water like a leaky barge because of a pronounced depression near second base. Shovels, rakes and pumps -- along with bats and balls -- are part of the team's equipment, and making the field playable before games has become part of a captain's job.

"This is the hand you're dealt, you try and keep a positive attitude, you try to work with it and the kids," Schimenz said of his school's sports program, which has no gymnasium, no athletic fields of its own, no money at all for uniforms, and not much more for equipment. Schimenz even paid for the bilge pump himself. "I don't know what the baseball budget is because I don't have one," he said.

First-year-teachers Jennie Chacko and Michael Maiglow received recognition in a *New York Daily News* article on a project that involved students in their social studies and reading classes as literacy volunteers working with preschool children from a Brooklyn day care center (Gonzalez, 1999). The article explained:

"Although 12-year old Monique Bullock has no younger siblings at home, she patiently read a book about the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to Tiffany Marie Jones as often as the 4-year old wanted the story repeated. Tiffany does not yet know how to read, and Monique still stumbles over some words, but both girls painlessly improved their literacy skills during the session at the library. . . "

In his book, *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty*, Martin Haberman (1995) questions whether Schools of Education can prepare teachers to effectively work with children in urban and suburban ethnic minority school districts. The university professors, new teachers, and mentors who are part of the Hofstra University New Teachers' Network believe this program offers real possibilities for strengthening the teaching profession and improving the quality of education in these communities.

References

Abdal-Haqq, I. (1995). *Professional development schools: A directory of projects in the U.S.* Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Ballou, D. and Podgursky, M. (1999). "Reforming teacher preparation and licensing: What is the evidence?" *Teachers College Record.* http://www.tcrecord.org ID Number 10434.

Calderone, J. and Buettner, R. (November 8, 1999). "Vicious cycle of failing schools, Uncertified teachers. *New York Daily News.*

Cochran-Smith, M. (1991). "Learning to teach against the grain." *Harvard Educational Review,* 61(3), 279-310.

Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. (1999). "Relationshps of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning communities." *Review of research in education, 24.* 249-305.

Cohen, D., McLaughlin, M. and Talbert, J. (1993*). Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999a). "Reforming teacher preparation and licensing: Debating the evidence." *Teachers College Record.* . http://www.tcrecord.org ID Number 10419.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999b). "Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching." *Teachers College Record.* . http://www.tcrecord.org ID Number 10417.

Durkheim, E. (1897/1951). *Suicide, A study in sociology.* New York: Free Press.

Evans, M. (June 16, 1998) "Bridging gaps, Student teachers go to minority areas." *Newsday,* A7.

Farkas, S. and Johnson, J. (1997). *Different drummers: How teachers of teachers view public education.* New York: Public Agenda.

Feiman-Nemser, S., Parker, M. and Zeichner, K. (1993). "Are mentor teachers teacher educators?" In D. McIntyre, H. Hagger, and M. Wilkens (eds.*) Mentoring: Perspectives on school-based teacher education.* Lodnon: Kogan Page. 147-165.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (1996). "Teacher mentoring: A critical review." *ERIC Digest.* ED397060.

Gonzalez, Carolina (January 21, 1999). "Book Plan Makes Grade," *New York Daily News,* KS1.

Goodnough, A. (March 13, 2000). "For mayor, Teacher pay shapes race for Senate,"

The New York Times, B3.

Gray, K. (December 23, 1996). "Rookie teachers get help from Hofstra." *Newsday*: A25.

Haberman, M. (1995). *Star teachers of children in poverty*. West Lafayette, IN: Kappa Delta Pi.

Hartocollis, A. (September 18, 1999). "Albany tightens standards for teachers and training." *The New York Times*, A 1.

Holmes Group. (1990). *Tomorrow's schools: Principles for the design of professional development schools*. East Lansing, MI: Author.

Holmes Group. (1995). *Tomorrow's schools of education*. East Lansing, MI: Author.

Kafi, P. and Singer, A. (January 1998). "Isomo Loruko: The Yoruba naming ceremony." *Social Education, Middle Level Learning:* M12-M14.

Kohl, H. (1994). *I won't learn from you, And other thoughts on creative maladjustment*. New York: New Press.

Labaree, D. (1995), "A disabling vision: Rhetoric and reality in Tomorrow's schools of education." *Teachers College Record*, 97(2), 166-205.

Labaree, D. (January-February, 1999). "Too easy a target, The trouble with Ed schools and the implications for the university." *Academe, Bulletin of the Association of Uuniversity Professors*, 35-39.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The Dreamkeepers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). "Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective." *Review of research in education, 24*. 211-247.

Lipman, P. (1998). *Race, Class, and Power in School Restructuring* . Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Little, J. (1990). "The mentor phenomenon and the social organization of teaching." In C. Cazden (ed.), *Review of research in education*. Volume 16. Washington DC: American Educational Research Association. 297-351.

Macchiarola, F. (March 8, 1999). "Higher standards, worse schools." *The New York Times*. A 72.

McDougall, C. (August 1, 1999). "Trial with fire: Students draw from their troubled lives to bring street wisdom to jurisprudence." *Education Life, The New York Times*.

Murphy, M. and Singer, A. (1996). "Preparing student teachers to 'cross' the cross island parkway." *ERIC Document*: ED395899.

NCT&AF (September 1996). *What matters most: Teaching for America's future*. New York: National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.

New York City Board of Education (1997). *School Profile, Intermediate School 292 District 19 Brooklyn*. New York: Author.

New York City Board of Education (1999). *School Profile, Law, Government and Community Service Campus Magnet High School, Queens*. New York: Author.

New York State Education Department (1998). *New York's commitment to teaching to higher standards*. Albany, New York: Author.

New York State Education Department (1999). *Adopted section 52.21 of the commissioner's regulations, Registration of curricula in teacher education*. Albany, New York: Author.

New York State Education Department (2000). *The New York State School Report Card for Lawrence Road Junior High School in Uniondale Union Free School District*. Albany, New York: Author.

New York State Education Department (2000). *The New York State School Report Card for Long Beach Senior High School in Long Beach City School District*. Albany, New York: Author.

Pezone, M. and Singer, A. (February 1997). "Empowering immigrants students through democratic dialogues." *Social education*: 75-79.

Putnam, R. and Borko, H. (2000). "What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning." *Educational researcher, 29*(1), 4-13.

Schwartz, F. (September 1996). "Why many new teachers are unprepared to teach in most New York City schools." *Phi delta kappan*: 82-84.

Sengupta, S. (October 22, 1997). "Are teachers of teachers out of touch?" *The New York Times*, B 8.

Singer, A., Gurton, L., Horowitz, A., Hunte, S., Broomfield, P. and Thomas, J. (September 1998). "Coming of age ceremonies: A mask project." *Social education, Middle level learning:* M14-M16.

Singer, J., Murphy, M. and Singer, A. (1999). "Listening to the diverse voices of educators in urban and suburban minority school districts." *Educators for urban minorities, 1*(1), 9-17.

United Federation of Teachers (March 5, 2000). "When our teachers are shortchanged our children are shortchanged." *The New York Times*, 4-19.

Wyatt, E. (March 15, 2000). "Teacher hiring rule relaxes, Opening quick jobs for those licensed elsewhere." *The New York Times*, B5.

Zeichner, K. (1999). "The new scholarship in teacher education." *Educational researcher, 28*(9), 4-15.